

## Widows gain insights from Columbo kitchens

PiCCA's project in Sri Lanka, delivered in partnership with Bridging Lanka, is supporting a group of widows to develop a catering company. This will enable women to be financially secure and independent.

In February, members of the Mannar Women's Catering Company in Sri Lanka travelled 8 hours to Columbo and, over 2 days, visited commercial kitchens and businesses, to see how food was stored, prepared and served and what was involved in running such outlets.

The women in the catering company also participated in a week-long series of training workshops, held to coincide with International Women's Day. The topics were identified through the women's business planning phase and included



cooking classes (Sinhalese dishes and 'one dish meals') as well as self-empowerment and leadership.

For more news on the PiCCA/ Bridging Lanka project, turn to page 3.

### In this issue

PiCCA is gearing up to take on another project this year: read all about the ideas that Members have put forward for consideration.

Who are our Members? We're a friendly bunch, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, but we all share a passion for making a difference in vulnerable communities overseas. On pages 3 & 4, meet PiCCA Members Mary and Francesca.

### New Members and donations are welcome

Whether you've been following us from the beginning, or just joined our subscribers' group, please consider taking the next step and joining our giving circle as a fully-fledged Member. Members choose PiCCA's projects and decide how the project funds are spent.

Or you can simply choose to donate to PiCCA's project fund. Your generosity will be appreciated. 100% of money donated into the project fund goes to projects overseas. PiCCA relies on Members' contributions and other donations to fund projects.

For further information, go to "[Members](#)" or "[Donate](#)" tabs on our website, [www.picca.org.au](http://www.picca.org.au). Contact us at [picca@picca.org.au](mailto:picca@picca.org.au) or 0407 691 009 (Stephanie) / 0417 324 597 (Warren).

## PiCCA's potential 2016 projects

PiCCA Members have suggested a range of ideas to be considered for PiCCA support this year. A committee of four Members and an independent panelist is currently assessing these ideas against PiCCA's strict funding criteria.

The projects that are considered worthy of PiCCA's support will be put to Members for a vote in late May. If you'd like to be involved - anyone's welcome - be sure to sign up as a Member before then at [www.picca.org.au/members](http://www.picca.org.au/members).

### Rural health services in western Kenya

In an area where there is extreme poverty, high HIV rates and high infant and maternal mortality, a rural health centre is trying to diversify its income sources, so that it is no longer dependent on international donors. The centre proposes to establish an enterprise delivering clean water to remote villages, to save people having to walk miles to Lake Victoria to collect water that is often unsafe. The truck delivering water can also transport outreach health services.



### Education in South Sudan

Only 16% of women in South Sudan are literate, compared to 27% of adults ([UNDP](#)). It is difficult to encourage girls and their families to value girls' education in a context where girls are often married young and pressured to work. A local girl empowerment organisation is proposing a range of activities to address the high dropout rates of about 600 girls in a rural area. The work includes influencing community attitudes about girls' education, and ensuring adequate resources and support for girls to attend school. Unfortunately, the area is still a conflict zone, so if the project meets PiCCA's criteria, the assessment committee may end up recommending this for a future year.

### Education in rural Nepal



*A makeshift classroom in Tawal post-earthquake*

In April and May last year, strong earthquakes devastated several areas of Nepal. Tawal and its surrounding villages, lying near the epicentre of the largest earthquake, suffered significant damage. Sadly, some residents were killed, and many homes and buildings were destroyed. The local committee of village leaders is seeking support from international donors to rebuild community infrastructure, including a farming co-op, hydro-electricity generator and schools. The specific proposal to PiCCA is to help locals rebuild a multi-purpose room in the main school, that will be used as a science and computer lab, to help students complete compulsory subjects.

### *Want to know more about these sorts of issues?*

[irinnews.org](http://irinnews.org) is a useful site for reports about humanitarian disasters. They also cover the current crises in [South Sudan](#) and [Syria](#).

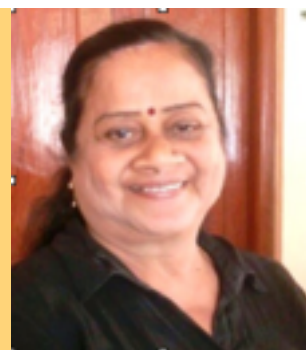
UNDP provides useful overviews of development priorities in [Kenya](#) and [PNG](#).

## Sri Lanka project update (continued from p1)

The other terrific news is that all of the approvals have been given for the Company to build a permanent kitchen on land which is controlled by the Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society. In exchange for using the land, the Company has agreed to incorporate a stationery shop into the kitchen complex for the Society, a staff canteen for the Divisional Secretary and a food outlet that the Company would operate.

New architectural plans have been finalised, and revised cost estimates are being prepared.

Meet Jessy Ariaratnam, newly appointed full-time as Bridging Lanka's Livelihood Program Coordinator, support for the women's catering company.



Jessy brings to the role experience as a human rights activist, facilitator, executive committee member and founder/ coordinator or the Mannar Women's Development Federation. We wish her much success!



## Meet PiCCA Member...

### Francesca Laura

I have been a language teacher for most of my working life. I love the contact with the students, the opportunity of learning myself about different cultures and connecting with all sorts of people. My travelling experiences, mainly in Europe and Asia, were a big eye-opener for me: seeing the world through different perspectives has

When I arrived in Australia, I fell in love with its landscapes, the wildlife, the sense of freedom. Deciding to stay has been the best decision I made in my life. I enjoy having a healthy lifestyle where I combine my passion for outdoor activities, especially bush-walking, bike-riding and swimming, with cooking and eating well and even trying to grow my own food. Well, some of it, at least!

#### *What I'm most passionate about*

While on a 'personal' level I love to immerse myself in nature, spend time with friends, exchange ideas and experiences with similar minded people, on a 'social' level, I am passionate about making the world a more equal place for everybody and try to do my bit to give people from a disadvantaged background, whatever it might be, a hand to improve their lives. I do some volunteering in community organisations, especially around health and nutrition, and support others that work to fight poverty and help refugees.

#### *What has inspired me*

I think it was the Dalai Lama who once said that even little actions can go a long way and gave the example of the difference that just one little mosquito can make to a room. I want to believe that he is right and am always inspired by people who make positive changes in their lives and the lives of others without being affected by the sense of helplessness that can overwhelm us when confronted with the enormity of the problems affecting the world.

#### *Why PiCCA?*

I am now at a stage of my life when sharing my skills and 'giving back' is just as important as continuing to learn. PiCCA reflects my values of equity and justice and offers me the possibility to be involved as a member as much as I want to be. Depending on my circumstances at the time, I may be able to provide some financial support, contribute some knowledge or experience, and one day even give a different slant to my love of travelling by visiting some of the projects that PiCCA funds.



## Meet PiCCA Member...

Mary Denver

*Tell us something about yourself*

Well I have been a bit of a global citizen, my Dad was an Australian expat in the 1950s in Indonesia, flying a small plane around the Sumatran oilfields. He was a sort of Indiana Jones figure, so I suppose I've inherited an international focus.

I've lived, studied and worked all over the place, including the US, UK and the Middle East and I spent 20 years on the island of Corfu, Greece where I raised a bilingual family. So it was natural for me to want to work at the then Bureau of Ethnic Affairs in the Queensland Government when I arrived in Brisbane in 1989, in time for the election of Wayne Goss and major cultural changes for Queensland.

However it was teaching English in Malaysia and Shanghai, China and my volunteer year in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2013-2014 which really focused my attention on international development.

*What was your role in Indonesia and what did you learn about effective international development there?*

I was a volunteer English language advisor working for Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) at Indonesia's National Commission on Violence against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*). The Commission advocates against all forms of violence against women in Indonesia while contributing to national law and policy reform and reporting on Indonesian women's human rights internationally.

My job was to build English language capability in any way I could for the 70-80 staff and Commissioners. This included working with them to apply for scholarships and fellowships to Australian universities, many of which were successful.

I also had a fantastic time travelling to parts of Indonesia and to Penang, Malaysia and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, whilst in the region.

While I worked hard to make a meaningful contribution on my AVID assignment, I do have some reservations about the role of volunteers in effective international development.

## Update on PiCCA's project in Swaziland

PiCCA has recently received some good news that Swaziland has received some much-needed rain. A record-breaking drought affecting southern Africa delayed PiCCA's project and led to food and water shortages.

Now, however, PiCCA's project partner, AMICAALL Swaziland, advises that the land set aside for the project has been ploughed and planted. A caretaker is in place and the land is being fenced.

The land is being developed as a sustainable and nutritious food source for Social Centres in Swaziland. These centres help to support vulnerable children (e.g. providing pre-school education and a meal).

*What are you most passionate about?*

As you may have guessed, I'm passionate about helping people to realise their potential! That applies to everyone, but it's working with people and women from developing countries, in particular, that inspires me most.

*Who or what has inspired you?*

The most inspiring moments in my life have been when I've seen individuals overcome major challenges to realise their true worth. At my farewell party in Jakarta a young woman whom I hardly knew stood up and in just-learned English said "thank you for showing me that I can achieve whatever I want".